

Message Text

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ACTION IO-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IOE-00 AGR-05 EB-07 AID-05

COME-00 L-03 TRSE-00 AF-06 ARA-06 EA-07 NEA-10 /073 W

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P 181536Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5794

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: FAO

SUBJ: FEBRUARY 23 WASHINGTON VISIT OF FAO DIRECTOR GENERAL:

U.S. APPLICATIONS FOR SENIOR FAO AND WFP POSITIONS.

FODAG

REF: STATE 036646.

1. REFTEL (ON CANADIAN NOMINATION FOR WORLD FOOD PROGRAM) INDICATES DEPARTMENT PLANS TO RAISE U.S. APPLICATIONS FOR FAO POSITIONS WITH FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL SAOUMA DURING HIS FEBRUARY 23 VISIT TO WASHINGTON. U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TO FAO WROTE OFFICIAL-INFORMAL LETTER ON THIS SUBJECT TO PAUL BYRNES (IO/AGR) (WITH COPIES TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY LEWIS AND DR. MOREY OF IO, AND DR. PHILLIPS OF AGRICULTURE), URGING EXTREME CAUTION ON THIS SUBJECT. LETTER WAS HELD TO REFLECT DR. PHILLIPS TALKS WITH SAOUMA, AND WAS POUCHED ONLY FEBRUARY 13, THUS THIS TELEGRAM TO BE SURE MAIN POINTS RAISED ARE CONSIDERED.

2. MAIN POINT IS THAT SURE WAY TO KILL U.S. APPLICANT'S CHANCES IS TO PRESS SAOUMA FOR COMMITMENT. U.S. REPRESENTATIVE IN LETTER TO BYRNES, TO DRIVE HOME THIS POINT, HAS LISTED SIX INSTANCES IN WHICH SUCH PRESSURES BOOMERANGED. EVEN IF SAOUMA DOES NOT REACT NEGATIVELY AT THE MOMENT, HIS STAFF SAY THEY HEAR IT TOLD THEM IN HIGH TEMPER LATER. THUS FAR HE HAS COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION TO HIS STAFF THAT U.S.

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HAS NOT PRESSED HIM.

3. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT WASHINGTON OFFICIALS SHOULD NOT RAISE U.S. APPLICANTS AT ALL. WE KNOW SAOUMA HAS BEEN BRIEFED TO TALK WITH US AND IF U.S. OFFICIALS DO NOT SHOW INTEREST, OR RAISE SUBJECT IF HE DOES NOT, HE MAY THINK USG HAS NO INTEREST. WE SUGGEST THAT NO MORE BE DONE ON SPECIFIC CASES THAN LIST A FEW HIGHLY QUALIFIED AMERICANS, CITING GOVERNMENT ENDORSEMENT FOR THEM, WHERE THIS MAY NOT HAVE BEEN DONE, AND LEAVE MATTER FOR HIS CONSIDERATION. IN MORE GENERAL TERMS, APART FROM SPECIFIC CASES, U.S. OFFICIALS SHOULD INDICATE CONCERN ABOUT GENERAL DECLINE IN U.S. REPRESENTATION--DROPPING BELOW 10 PERCENT OF GEOGRAPHICALLY APPOINTED POSITIONS FOR FIRST TIME IN NOVEMBER 1975, AND PUTTING US BEHIND BRITISH. (IN DECEMBER U.S. PERCENTAGE HAS FURTHER DECLINED TO 9.7 PERCENT.) WITH ITS MAJOR ROLE IN AGRICULTURE AND ITS GREAT NUMBERS OF WELL-TRAINED PERSONNEL, U.S. SHOULD NORMALLY HAVE PREDOMINANT POSITION (ARGUMENT WITH WHICH SAOUMA MAY BE SWAYED, BECAUSE DESPITE HIS FRENCH EDUCATION IN AGRONOMY, HE HAS SENT HIS SON TO CORNELL FOR TRAINING). WE UNDERSTAND SAOUMA HAS BEEN BRIEFED ON SUGGESTION THAT UNITED STATES ENTER MORE HEAVILY INTO ASSOCIATE EXPERT PROGRAM, WHICH THUS FAR HAS BEEN RESTRICTED TO SMALL-SCALE AID AUTHORIZATION. WE IN ROME STRONGLY FAVOR MORE GENERAL U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROGRAM, AS USEFUL METHOD OF INJECTING YOUNG AMERICAN BLOOD INTO FAO. BUT THIS WOULD TAKE YEARS, AND WOULD NOT HAVE ANY IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON CURRENT GENERAL DECLINE IN U.S. PARTICIPATION OR ON HOLDING OF KEY POSTS BY U.S. NATIONALS IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE.VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ROME02622
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760060-1063
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760239/aaaabhvc.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 36646
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <01 JUL 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FEBRUARY 23 WASHINGTON VISIT OF FAO DIRECTOR GENERAL: U.S. APPLICATIONS FOR SENIOR FAO AND WFP POSITIONS.
TAGS: AORG, APER, FAO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006